

Department of State- U.S. Embassy Kabul

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Kabul
Funding Opportunity Title: Management and Establishment of English Language Centers in Afghanistan
Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-11-AW-005-SCA-071011
Deadline for Applications: September 10, 2011
CFDA 19.501

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the United States information and education exchange act of 1948, Public Law 80-402 22 USC, key statute at Section 501 (a), also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. The purpose of the Act is to “provide for interchanges between the United States and other countries of books and periodicals, including government publications, for the translation of such writings, and for the preparation, distribution, and interchange of other educational materials.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation contact **Stephen Hanchey**, English Language Officer, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: Email: hancheysg@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*); Phone: +93 (0)700 10 7810 or 301-490-1042 ext. 7810. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAKAB-11-AW-005-SCA-071011 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul announces an open competition for registered Afghan NGOs for a cooperative agreement to coordinate logistics associated with establishing and administering university-based English Language Centers (ELCs) during the period of November 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012. English Language Centers are computer and language learning venues currently located at nine locations in seven Afghan universities throughout Afghanistan. Locations of any new ELCs will be determined by the U.S. Embassy. ELCs help Afghan university students to improve their English proficiency through open-access and instructor led courses using the latest off-the-shelf and tailored software, curricula and web-based resources. The budget available for this program will include all logistical costs, to include materials, hardware, furnishings, renovation costs, books, personnel, utilities, and all operating expenses.

Administration and National Policy Perspective

The U.S. Government (USG) is providing resources to promote diplomatic solutions to the challenges faced in Afghanistan, through language training, critical skills development, and other public diplomacy programs. These resources support the people, platforms, and programs necessary to meet the international challenges to American security and welfare.

II. BACKGROUND

ELCs are part of the Afghan e-Learning English Support Project (AeLESP). ELCs are dedicated English language and IT training spaces hosted in various locations at public universities in Afghanistan. All of the existing ELCs were originally established under the auspices of the USAID-sponsored Afghan e-Quality Alliances Project (AeQA), the predecessor project to AeLESP, or under the USAID-funded Higher Education Project (HEP). Under AeLESP, an attempt has been made to refocus the ELCs on student-oriented English language learning augmented by computer-assisted language learning software applications and on basic IT certification using the internationally recognized ICDL training and certification scheme. The heart of an ELC is its commitment to provide up-to-date English language programs open to various university audiences, depending on individual university policies and priorities. Most offer computer-assisted language learning (CALL) software applications, on- and off-line English teaching resources, free internet access, computer work stations, and an area for small programs. The project is administered by a central project team out of premises at Kabul University, where a small English Resource Center is also located.

Objectives: ELCs serve as platforms offering English language and basic IT training classes, library facilities, programming venues, and Internet connectivity. A goal of the project is to reach at least 4,000 Afghan university students and teaching faculty per month per location.

In some locations, the ELC is the only place where non-traditional English and IT training sessions and workshops can take place due to infrastructure challenges, and it often offers the only free Internet access available to the universities' student population and teaching faculty.

Characteristics of an English Language Center

1. Status is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – signed by the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section, Afghan national and/or provincial university officials and, the Afghan non-governmental partner organization – that outlines the shared commitment and respective responsibilities of each institution/organization.
2. English teaching and IT training resources including computer-assisted language learning software, ICDL training materials, books, CD-ROMs, videos, DVDs, and posters.
3. Supervised computer and Internet access.
4. Daily regular English and IT classes and occasional workshops for English teachers (at least two per month).
5. English-speaking staff.
6. Provision of free Internet and ICDL training to members of the university community as determined by the university administration.

ELCs in Afghanistan usually also have the following characteristics:

- Library - minimum of 18 square meter of book shelf space and a minimum of 500 books;
- Venue for programs to accommodate 30 seats;
- At least 20 computer work stations;
- Furniture (reading tables, chairs, book shelves, etc.); and
- Supplies and equipment: uninterruptible power supply (UPS) units, generators, fuel for generators, printers, copier, scanners, digital camera, heaters, TV, etc.)

Nine ELCs currently exist in seven locations around Afghanistan: Herat University (2), Nangarhar University, Kabul (Kabul University and Kabul Polytechnic University), Khost (Sheikh Zayed University), Balkh University (2), and Kandahar University.

For calculating budgets, applicants should budget for following *monthly* estimated administration costs for each center:

- salary and benefits or allowances for Center coordinator, English coordinator and instructors, IT instructor/coordinator, and part-time cleaner;
- internet connectivity;
- electricity; and,
- maintenance and supplies.

Administration and operational costs total approximately \$6,250 per month on average per ELC. To operate the current nine centers, it is expected to cost approximately \$74,000 per month. This does not include senior personnel associated with central project management or travel and per diem costs. Budget may be renegotiated if costs increase. Additional costs associated with establishing two new ELCs at new universities are also not included.

Scope of Award: PAS and the award Recipient would agree to participate jointly in the management of the ELCs. Each party would have specific obligations and responsibilities under the terms of the cooperative agreement, as outlined below.

The award Recipient shall provide the following overall support:

- Operating and administering the existing ELCs operationally for the period of January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012, following a transition period of up to two months working side-by-side with the current ELC grantee organization, beginning as early as November 1, 2011.
- Working with the current ELC administrative organization on a smooth transition during the period of November 1- Dec. 31, 2011.
- Establishing and administering up to two new ELCs during the period of January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012. This support will include overseeing the renovation of the sites and hiring new staff. The sites for new ELCs will be selected by the U.S. Embassy in conjunction with the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and funded separately.

The award Recipient shall provide the following support for each English Language Center:

- Employ up to four qualified staff members, selected in cooperation with PAS, to oversee each ELC; formally develop, document, and sign their terms of employment and disperse their monthly salaries in a timely manner. The first staff member is the ELC Coordinator, responsible for overall management of the site and programming held at the ELC. Other staff members might include an English Coordinator/Instructor, an IT Coordinator/Instructor, and any additional English instructors required by the volume of classes offered, who will be employed on an hourly basis. Female candidates will be encouraged.
- Pay for general maintenance, upkeep, and additional utilities not covered and paid for by the host institution under the MOU.
- Provide regular oversight of the ELCs, including quarterly assessment visits to address any management, administrative, and maintenance concerns at each site.
- Negotiate with outside vendors, establish and sign contracts and pay for needed services.
- Establish a standard list of office supplies required by the Coordinators; purchase supplies as necessary and distribute accordingly.
- Purchase computer equipment and pay for continuous Internet connection to the ELCs if not available from the NATO Silk Afghanistan project.

- At PAS discretion, replace damaged or outdated electronic equipment to ensure continued services.
- Fund travel, per diem, and tuition for ELC and Recipient project management staff to attend relevant training programs at locations in Afghanistan (twice per year) or abroad (once per year).
- Build the capacity of Afghan universities to manage ELCs without foreign-based assistance.
- Submit itemized quarterly reports to the U.S. Embassy on program activities and budgets for each ELC.
- Submit itemized quarterly financial reports and an end-of-year full report.

The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) shall provide the following support:

- Identify Afghan university partners and choose new ELC locations throughout Afghanistan.
- Develop and obtain signed MOUs outlining responsibilities of Afghan government and host institution partners in consultation with the Recipient.
- Approve final selection of ELC staff members in cooperation with the Recipient.
- Provide and maintain the inventory of English teaching and IT training collection including software, books, course materials, periodicals, DVDs, and CD-ROMs.
- Develop and continually review programming at the ELCs to ensure programs support U.S. objectives and are pertinent to Afghan university audiences.
- Review monthly budget expenditures.
- Cover extraordinary costs associated with building maintenance or security enhancements.
- Ensure that security for operating ELCs is provided by the host institutions.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Eligibility is limited to registered Afghan non-profit organizations, individually or in consortium.
- The Department encourages organizations that have previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement.

- Applicants must have demonstrated experience in the following subject areas:
 - management of budgets and human resources;
 - working in the cultural, English teaching, or educational fields;
 - working in Afghanistan, especially with vendors, suppliers, contractors, etc.; and,
 - program development and implementation.
- Organizations should have appropriately staffed offices in Afghanistan as of the date of application.
- Expertise and established relationships with Afghan NGOs and/or Afghan Government officials and institutions will be considered favorably.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Not Applicable.

IV. AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

Fiscal Year Funds: 2011/2012

Approximate Total Funding: \$1,000,000 pending availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Anticipated Award Date: Pending availability of funds, October 15, 2011

Anticipated Project Completion Date: December 31, 2012

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years this cooperative agreement may be renewed.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit complete proposals electronically to PAS Kabul directly at: KabulPDProposals@state.gov. For questions about this solicitation, contact **Stephen Hanchey**, English Language Officer, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:

Email: hancheysg@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

Phone: +93 (0)700 10 7810 or 301-490-1042 ext. 7810

Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAKAB-11-AW-005-SCA-071011 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before September 20, 2011, 11:59 p.m. Afghanistan time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for

consideration. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

The proposals may not exceed 8 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 6 below.

The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):

This form can be found on-line at: <http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content/Documents/SF424-V2.0.pdf>.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified need, proposed activities, and expected results.

Section 3 - Problem Statement:

The problem statement must describe the need for the project, with regards to: location, local resources, and regional challenges. This statement should also identify the demographic targets and educational, cultural and social goals for the English Language Centers.

Section 4 - Project Objectives/Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project, relative to the problem statement. The proposed activities should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. Finally, this section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 5 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, organizational experience, and background in Afghanistan as these relate to the proposed activities. The description should include information on the logistical strengths of the organization in Afghanistan, i.e. offices, vehicles, infrastructure, security, etc. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. The proposal should include a statement on how security would be provided for recipient staff members. While the award recipient is responsible for providing their own security, related expenses may be included in the proposal budget.

Section 6 - Appendices:

The concept paper submission must include three appendices. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget (Required)** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget may include an estimated cost for continuation activities, which will be considered for successful applicants to this RFP in future fiscal years based on performance and the availability of funds. The budget may include security requirements.
- (b) **Resumes (Required)** – resumes, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director and any other staff in decision-making positions.
- (c) **Letters of Intent (Required)** – Letters of intent from all partners should be included with the application. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. Please note that these are not letters of support and should only be included for those organizations that will play an active role in the project, including those that receive financial support through the project budget. The individual letters cannot exceed one page in length, and applicants are limited to submitting up to five letters per proposal.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Consistent with the federal grant regulations, the Department reserves the right to give priority for its funds to those organizations working on key USG objectives that are and have been supportive, in policy and programs, of USG policies on Public Diplomacy.

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of Department of State and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFP.

- **Problem Statement (10 points):** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant's proposal to the broader U.S. Public Diplomacy policy objectives as well as relevance to the program objectives of the Department of State as described under the first two Sections of this solicitation.

- **Implementation Plan (30 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period. The review panel will be interested in seeing practical and innovative plans for building the capacity of Afghan citizens to manage public access information centers as well as innovative programming ideas.
- **Organizational Capability (35 points):** Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved in the establishment and administration of the English Language Centers.
- **Appendices (25 points):**
 - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
 - **Resumes:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the bidder's proposed Project Director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
 - **Letters of Intent:** The review panel will consider the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with local organizations. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of such organizations to participate in the effort, and that all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The cooperative agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will

be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Reporting Requirements: Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.